

## Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

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S E C R E T STATE 013681

NODIS  
HOLD FOR AMBASSADOR FOR OPENING OF BUSINESS

E.O. 11652: XGDS - 3

TAGS: TSPA, NATO

SUBJECT:RE-ENTRY OF SOVIET SATELLITE, COSMOS 954

1. WE HAVE BEEN TRACKING THE SOVIET SATELLITE COSMOS 954  
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AND HAVE DETERMINED THAT ITS ORBIT IS RAPIDLY DECAYING  
AND THAT RE-ENTRY INTO THE EARTH'S DENSER ATMOSPHERE WILL  
OCCUR AROUND 23 JANUARY 1978. THE SOVIET UNION HAS  
CONFIRMED TO US THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS THAT THIS  
SATELLITE CARRIES A NUCLEAR POWER SOURCE, WHICH WE BELIEVE  
TO BE A SMALL NUCLEAR REACTOR, AND THAT DUE TO EQUIPMENT  
FAILURE ABOARD THE SPACECRAFT THE POWER SOURCE WILL ENTER

THE ATMOSPHERE ALONG WITH THE SATELLITE. NORMALLY THE REACTOR WOULD HAVE BEEN SEPARATED FROM THE SATELLITE AND BOOSTED INTO A HIGHER ORBIT WHERE IT WOULD REMAIN FOR MORE THAN 500 YEARS AND LOSE MOST OF ITS RADIOACTIVITY.

2. OUR EXPERTS ARE INCLINED TO THE VIEW THAT THE REACTOR IS OF A TYPE THAT HAS A HIGH PROBABILITY FOR DISASSEMBLY AND BURNING UPON RE-ENTRY RESULTING IN A NEGLIGIBLE HEALTH PROBLEM TO THE PUBLIC. IN THE EVENT THAT SOME DEBRIS MIGHT REACH THE EARTH'S SURFACE THERE IS A 75 PERCENT CHANCE THAT IT WILL IMPACT WATER RESULTING IN MINIMAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, BUT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHERE IT MIGHT LAND.

SHOULD FRAGMENTS OF THE RADIOACTIVE CORE IMPACT LAND, THEY WOULD POSE A HEALTH RISK IF THEY FALL WITHIN A POPULATED AREA.

3. THE SOVIETS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY ARE CLOSELY MONITORING THE SATELLITE AND THAT IF IT IS ESTABLISHED THAT SOME PARTS OF THE SATELLITE WILL LAND OUTSIDE THE SOVIET UNION, THEY WILL ACT IN CONFORMITY WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW. ALL AVAILABLE U.S. SATELLITE TRACKING ASSETS ARE BEING UTILIZED TO TRACK THE SOVIET SATELLITE. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF NON-CONTINUOUS COVERAGE AND BECAUSE OF VARIATIONS IN RE-ENTRY TRAJECTORY WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO ACCURATELY DETERMINE THE POINT OF IMPACT.

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4. THE US HAS TEAMS OF EXPERTS QUALIFIED IN LOCATING AND REMOVING RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL SHOULD THE DEBRIS IMPACT THE US. THESE TEAMS AND THEIR EQUIPMENT ARE ALSO ON STANDBY FOR PROVIDING ASSISTANCE SHOULD RADIOACTIVE DEBRIS IMPACT ELSEWHERE AND THEIR ASSISTANCE BE REQUESTED.

5. YOU ARE REQUESTED TO ADVISE THE FOREIGN MINISTER PROMPTLY OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS CABLE AND REQUEST THAT IT BE VERY CLOSELY HELD AND YOU SHOULD STRESS THAT WE ARE INFORMING ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF COUNTRIES THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. WE ARE NOT PLANNING ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT UNLESS DEBRIS LANDS IN THE US.

6. WE WILL INFORM THE HOST GOVERNMENT OF ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING THE SATELLITE, INCLUDING OUR BEST ANALYSIS OF WHERE THE IMPACT OCCURS.

7. IF HOST GOVERNMENT HAS QUESTIONS, PLEASE REPORT THEM TO DEPARTMENT ASAP BY IMMEDIATE NODIS CABLE. CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** MONITORING, SATELLITES, SPACE PROGRAMS, SPACE EXPLORATION, NAVIGATIONAL AIDS, COSMOS 954, CAT-B  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 18 jan 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978STATE013681  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** PTARNOFF:GB  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** X3  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
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**Message ID:** dbf93be2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
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**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** NODIS, ONLY  
**Page Count:** 3  
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**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** NODIS, ONLY  
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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
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**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 3752791  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** RE-ENTRY OF SOVIET SATELLITE, COSMOS 954  
**TAGS:** TSPA, UR, NATO  
**To:** ALL NATO CAPITALS TOKYO MULTIPLE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
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